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Chairperson: Mr. Penke ..... (Latvia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/315)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/64/172, A/64/182-E/2009/110 and A/64/254)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/64/285)

1. **Ms. Mndebele** (Swaziland) said that her country had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was taking steps to implement it fully; its poverty reduction strategy and plan, was in line with its policy of putting children first. Swaziland thanked its development partners and UNICEF for the assistance they were providing in that area.

2. The main initiatives taken to promote and protect the rights of the child were rooted in traditional Swazi culture — which required communities and extended families to care for all children — and were directed, in particular, at orphans and vulnerable children whose numbers were increasing dramatically due, in large part, to the HIV/AIDS pandemic and increasing poverty.

3. The Government was in the process of making free primary education a reality and it asked for the support of the international community in order to make education accessible to all.

4. Her Government condemned all forms of violence against children, especially sexual violence. It had signed the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, which urged Member States to take measures to deal with the increasing levels of violence against women and children. It was also strengthening legislation in that area and had set up a Domestic Violence and Child Protection Unit under the Royal Swaziland Police and a Sexual Offences Unit. A community-driven initiative for the protection of children from sexual violence and emotional abuse had also been set up.

5. Her delegation was concerned that human trafficking was increasing throughout the world. Children, especially girls, were particularly vulnerable to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Swaziland had contributed to the development of a SADC regional plan of action designed to combat trafficking in human beings and it strongly supported the initial steps that had been taken to establish a global plan of action for the same purpose within the context of the United Nations, as decided at the eleventh African Union summit, in June 2008, and at the fifteenth summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, in July 2009.

6. **Ms. Arias** (Peru) said that her Government had taken a number of steps with the support, inter alia, of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Organization of American States to register children living in indigenous communities and marginalized urban areas in the register of births, marriages and deaths so that they could fully exercise their right to a name and an identity.

7. As regards health, the report prepared in cooperation with UNICEF on the state of children in Peru in 2008 showed that the country had made great progress in fighting infant mortality. The global situation remained disturbing, however, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the special session of the General Assembly on children (A/64/285). In that connection the international community should adopt the MDG-plus goals; of these the one concerning the fight against non-communicable diseases would be a priority, as her delegation had already stated at the latest ministerial meeting of the Economic and Social Council.

8. As regards education, the national education project 2020 sought to promote the preparation of programmes that took into account the country's cultural and socio-economic diversity so as to provide a quality education to all children without discrimination. Strengthening the bilingual education programme was another priority goal in that area. In addition, her Government was fighting malnutrition, which could be both a result and a cause of poverty and which had an adverse impact on school attendance.

9. Lastly, Peru believed that, in order for children to develop properly, they should be safeguarded from violence. In September 2009, it had hosted the twentieth Pan American Child Congress, whose goal was to encourage children to participate in the preparation of policies, plans and programmes relating to children. It had also had the honour of organizing the first Pan American Forum on Children, during which children from 22 countries had been able to talk about their complaints and ambitions.

10. **Ms. Kavun** (Ukraine) associated her delegation with the statement made by the Presidency of the European Union. Stressing the importance of cooperation between the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, civil society and Governments in order to promote and protect the rights of the child, she said that issues concerning mothers and children must be covered by global strategies, particularly within the United Nations system. In that connection, Ukraine paid tribute to the work done by UNICEF and the other specialized agencies.

11. Convinced that implementation of the commitments made by States as regards the rights of the child, particularly those stemming from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and from the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, which had been devoted to children, Ukraine had made protecting and ensuring the welfare of children a national priority. It had made progress with regard to the care and adoption of orphans and children deprived of parental care and was seeking to bring its legislation into line with the international instruments it had ratified.

12. Turning to the issue of child trafficking and violence against children, she stressed the need to implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

13. Her delegation welcomed the initiative to draw up an optional protocol concerning appeals procedures and it had supported the resolution concerning the establishment of a working group on the subject, which the Human Rights Council had adopted by consensus.

14. It was also concerned about the health of children, particularly in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster. There were nearly 2 million children who were still suffering from its effects, 23 years after the disaster; special attention should be paid to them on the medical and social level.

15. **Ms. Mubukwanu Sibanze** (Zambia) said that her Government was anxious to promote and protect the rights of children and it was implementing the relevant resolutions and international instruments by enacting appropriate legislation. Zambia was currently undergoing a constitutional reform which, when completed, would provide for better protection and promotion of human rights for all, including children. As a State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Zambia intended to adhere to the two optional protocols thereto once the ongoing consultations were concluded. It urged those Member States which had not yet signed or acceded to the Convention to do so.

16. Her Government was trying to attenuate the effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on children's health and on family support systems. With the support of the World Health Organization, it had also strengthened neonatal and maternal care, and had stepped up its immunization and anti-malaria programmes.

17. In cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UNICEF it had taken steps to promote the education of girls, inter alia, by allowing girls who became pregnant while still in school to return to school after giving birth; it was also seeking to integrate disabled children into the education system.

18. In an effort to protect children from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse, Zambia had enacted various laws, inter alia, in the field of employment in order to bring domestic legislation into line with Convention No. 182 and Convention No. 138 of the International Labour Organization. It had also enacted laws to combat trafficking in human beings and child pornography on the Internet. Lastly, it had instituted shelters and training programmes for street children and had expanded its social safety nets in order to ensure the social and economic well-being of its children. However, its efforts had been hampered by inadequate resources and it would therefore welcome the support of the international community.

19. **Mr. Chan** Ying Yin (Singapore) said that his country, after acceding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, had made progress in terms of lower infant mortality rates and the high proportion of children immunized. It attached great importance to ensuring the physical, mental and social health of children and, to that end, it encouraged students to participate in national and international sports events. It had, for example, hosted the first Asian Youth Games that year and was honoured to have been selected to host the first Youth Olympic Games, which were to be held in August 2010. Conscious of the importance of the family for a child's holistic development, the Government had established organizations designed to help families — inter alia, by providing financial and

other assistance — provide a healthy and nurturing environment.

20. His Government was particularly proud of its educational system, which was well regarded internationally. The system was based on a comprehensive and integrated approach designed to meet children's various needs. Programmes were adapted to the students' interests and strengths and the teaching staff received the support they needed in order to be able to exercise their profession with the necessary passion and sense of professionalism.

21. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) reaffirmed his Government's support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the commitments made by the international community in 2002 to create a world fit for children. Putting children at the centre of its development programme was a matter of survival for Ethiopia, since 52 per cent of the population was under 18. It had therefore established the legal and institutional framework necessary to reverse the particularly disturbing situation that had existed at the start of the 1990s as regards malnutrition, infant mortality and literacy. The Ethiopian Constitution of 1996 provided for measures to protect children and the Millennium Development Goals had been integrated into the country's poverty reduction strategy.

22. Ethiopia had taken a number of measures that were essential for children's health. Immunization against six childhood diseases was provided free of charge in public institutions and a strategy had been introduced in order to improve the management of childhood illnesses. It linked preventive and curative services through programmes relating to nutrition, malaria and infectious diseases. Health centres had been set up in rural areas and efforts were being made to ensure that the poor were not left out. It had also made considerable progress in reducing child mortality and increasing access to clean water.

23. Primary and general secondary education and related training (up to the tenth grade) was free. The Government had increased public spending on primary education in real terms and was focusing on the quality of education and on measures to reduce drop-out rates. The enrolment rate for girls in the lower primary cycle had greatly increased and more children from disadvantaged backgrounds were now attending school. Following the introduction of a federal system of government, each region was entitled to use local vernacular as a medium of instruction in primary schools. Schools had also been set up in certain major urban centres for minority groups who did not speak the local vernacular. Ethiopia would attain the goal of universal education long before 2015.

24. Ethiopia was making numerous efforts to meet the needs of children from minority, marginalized and vulnerable groups. It had set up institutions to facilitate the care of children in especially difficult circumstances, such as orphans who had lost both parents, children not living with their biological mothers and children living in single-parent households. In collaboration with several NGOs it had put in place, child-focused interventions in basic health care, education and protection for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. In addition, in cooperation with UNICEF, the Government was providing formal and non-formal education to thousands of children. It was also trying to provide access to basic social services for marginalized groups living in peripheral areas, including pastoral and semi-pastoral areas of the country.

25. Ethiopia had already made significant progress, but lack of resources, shortage of skilled manpower and natural disasters were seriously hampering efforts to improve the welfare of children. He stressed the need for more resources and cooperation, both at the national and at the international level in order to bolster efforts to improve the welfare of children.

26. **Mr. Valero** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) pointed out that, in order to end the poverty, inequality and social exclusion which afflicted children throughout the world, children's fundamental rights must be fully respected. Respect for those rights was a matter of national policy in Venezuela, now that the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had become part of domestic legislation. A national council on the rights of the child had been set up which was responsible for protecting children and adolescents. In addition, the Government had set up a mission to ensure that children in vulnerable situations were able to exercise their rights fully and had developed a number of programmes to meet the needs of such children. There was now a prevention and monitoring mechanism designed to ensure that no child became a victim of sexual violence, prostitution, exploitation or drug addiction.

27. His Government had introduced a variety of innovative social programmes designed to promote

preschool education and universal education for children up to the age of six and to provide schooling for adolescents and to reduce drop-out rates among the latter. Other initiatives had been launched as regards school meals, languages so as to guarantee official and equal use of native languages and Spanish, and as regards reintegration of young delinquents into society. Lastly, Venezuela had adopted a new law on education designed, inter alia, to help children look critically at the world around them.

28. The social policies were bearing fruit in all areas and Venezuela was well on the way to achieving the MDG targets ahead of schedule, thus demonstrating that Venezuela was at the forefront of the battle against injustice and inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

29. **Mr. Al-Shami** (Yemen) said that much had yet to be done in order to achieve a "world fit for children". The various crises facing the world and climate change had made the situation of children worse and had slowed progress towards achieving the international goals. He therefore called for a redoubling of efforts at both the national level and the international level in order to stay on track. In that connection, he welcomed the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

30. Yemen had been among the first to accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the two optional protocols thereto. It reported regularly to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, had ratified several international conventions relevant thereto and had brought its national legislation into line with its international obligations. The Constitution of Yemen contained several provisions that guaranteed the rights of the child and his Government had set up the necessary institutional mechanisms in order to implement its legislation on the subject, including a high council for mothers and children and a Ministry of human rights.

31. Issues relating to children ranked high among the various strategies and programmes adopted since the 1990s. They included the national strategy against child labour (2001), the strategy to improve basic education, the development plan for the period 2006-2011 and the framework for implementing the Head of State's electoral programme. Yemen had also launched a national strategy for children and young people and had created a high council for children and young people. It was convinced that children should participate in discussions of issues concerning children and in the related solutions. It had established a children's parliament which was a model for the region for, in it, children could speak freely about matters that concerned them and they could even call members of parliament and ask them questions.

32. His Government appreciated the help provided by its international partners, especially UNICEF, and hoped that those efforts would be continued and stepped up. Lastly, he recalled that Yemen condemned the violations of the rights of Arab children living under Israeli occupation and called on the international community to assume its responsibilities in order to put an end to that occupation and enable Arab children to live in peace.

33. **Mr. Onemola** (Nigeria), after recalling that Nigeria had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional declarations and treaties aimed at improving the situation of children, drew attention to the initiatives Nigeria had taken in that regard. In 2003, it had enacted the Child's Rights Act thereby making the commitments it had undertaken part of its national legislation; the Act had entered into force in 22 of the 36 States of the Federation. Moreover, in 2007, a national child policy had been launched to provide guidance for the various authorities responsible for implementing that Act.

34. In 2007, the Government had launched a national plan of action on orphans and vulnerable children as the number of such children was continuing to increase due, inter alia, to malaria and HIV/AIDS. A situation assessment and analysis of their numbers had been conducted in 2008 in order to obtain the necessary data and information for planning and coordinating interventions. Other initiatives to help orphans and vulnerable children included awareness-raising activities, production of anti-retroviral treatment, psychological support for children infected with HIV/AIDS and efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

35. As for education, although Nigeria continued to make steady progress as regards primary education, girls still accounted for more than half of the children not in school. It had adopted a number of strategies to remedy the situation, inter alia, by putting in place a universal basic education programme, literacy and

skills acquisition projects and other measures to improve girls' education. In addition, it had established a children's parliament at the national and state level so that children could express their views and contribute to policy formulation and implementation.

36. Since the state of children's health was an indicator of a nation's level of development, Nigeria had adopted the Integrated Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Strategy to reduce maternal mortality and child morbidity and it had also shown greater commitment to meeting the MDG targets. The President's wife had done a lot to raise awareness among policymakers, religious, traditional and opinion leaders of the importance of working together to reduce infant and child mortality.

37. Many children in Nigeria were involved in drug abuse, forced marriages, domestic labour, trafficking, prostitution, rape and abductions. In order to address those problems, the Federal Government had commenced the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Furthermore, a draft national action plan on violence against children was being finalized. Nigeria had granted the International Organization for Migration the right to use, free of charge for 10 years, shelter facilities to house and provide temporary assistance to rescued trafficked children.

38. Reiterating his Government's commitment to protecting the rights of children and to their welfare, he acknowledged the support provided by the United Nations and international agencies in that regard and urged them to continue their assistance with regard to funding and capacity-building.

39. **Mr. Mohan** (India) recalled that India had eliminated tetanus in children and pregnant women in some parts of the country and was working on eradicating polio, tuberculosis and diphtheria. Thanks to the Integrated Child Development Scheme, which had been started in 1975, millions of children and pregnant women were now receiving nutritious meals. In rural areas, pregnant women were encouraged to deliver their babies in hospital and needy women received financial assistance after delivery. The Government had earmarked US$ 100 million to build first-class children's hospitals in several regions.

40. Thanks to the efforts of Sonia Gandhi, 140 million children had their midday meal in school every day, enabling them to have a high-protein diet. Pursuant to the Right to Education Act, education was free and compulsory for all children below the age of 14 years. There was also an Act banning child labour and violence against children.

41. Noting that millions of children currently died in infancy, were undernourished, had no access to education and lacked health care, he urged the international community to help by increasing the level of official development assistance.

42. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) recalled that, in armed conflicts, the main tool for fighting child recruitment was prevention and that it was vital to provide children with education even in emergencies and to emphasize that schools were protected pursuant to international humanitarian law.

43. She welcomed the adoption in June of that year of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations/Department of Field Support child protection policy directive, which called for taking into account the situation of children affected by conflicts in all United Nations activities, and of Security Council resolution 1882 (2009) condemning the killing, maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence against children.

44. While her delegation condemned sexual violence against girls, as demonstrated by the fact that it had co-sponsored the aforesaid resolution, sexual violence against boys was also a real problem, particularly in displaced person and refugee camps. She welcomed the mechanisms that had been put in place to draw attention — and put an end — to such atrocities.

45. Although the international community had well-established rules to promote and protect the rights of the child, applying those rules remained a challenge in the face of conflicts, terrorist acts, spread of small arms, rapes and widespread use of sexual violence, and also poverty. Recalling how important it was to rehabilitate child victims, she pointed out that her own country supported the plan to hold a third Ministerial Follow-Up Forum to the Paris Commitments to review the financing of shelters and reintegration programmes.

46. She welcomed the appointment of the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and said that Monaco would give the Special Representative its full support. She

concluded by drawing attention to the steps taken by Monaco at the level of international cooperation, inter alia the establishment of clinics, maternity hospitals and even institutions for children with disabilities, its contribution to programmes to fight hunger and, in partnership with the World Health Organization, its financing of immunization programmes in Africa.

47. **Ms. Pi** (Uruguay) recalled that the Uruguayan Code on Children and Adolescents established two fundamental principles: the need to protect and safeguard the best interests of children. In addition to the Institute of Children and Adolescents, which was responsible for policy relating to children, Uruguay had set up an honorary advisory committee on children and adolescents whose mission was to coordinate Government action in support of respect for the fundamental rights of children and adolescents, to draw up a budget for carrying out policies, to examine what legislative amendments were needed and to make new proposals on the issue. It was in that spirit that the country had developed its national strategy on children and youth 2010-2030.

48. In the context of its efforts to attain the MDG targets, Uruguay had integrated issues relating to children into all its policies and had obtained remarkable results in terms of reduction of poverty and malnutrition, universal primary and secondary education, advancement of equality between the sexes, reduction of child mortality and improvement of maternal health.

49. Since children and adolescents had been especially affected by poverty in recent decades, Uruguay had introduced a number of programmes to improve the lot of underprivileged children and, above all, that of street children. The idea was to reunite street children with their families and communities, as appropriate or to provide spaces to which they could go. She emphasized the fundamental role played by non-governmental organizations in that respect.

50. As for education, Uruguay had made great progress in recent years in cooperation with UNICEF and some non-governmental organizations towards enrolling poor children and adolescents in school, keeping children in school and helping marginalized teenagers to return to school. Uruguay had drawn up a plan to provide each public school pupil and teacher with a laptop computer and free Internet access. Students with mental, physical or visual disabilities would also receive a portable computer adapted to their needs. Uruguay would thus be the first country in the world to provide universal access to new information technologies for all girls and boys, whatever their social situation or place of residence.

51. With regard to the work of the Third Committee, she noted that the omnibus resolution on the rights of the child to be submitted at the current session would place special emphasis on the right of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her, and on the importance of giving due weight to such views. Uruguay, as a co-sponsor of the resolution, felt that the right to express one's views was one of the fundamental elements of responsible citizenship.

52. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana) said that her country was committed to promoting and protecting the dignity and rights of children, and it supported practical measures to promote their development. Its priorities were to promote access to quality education and health care, child protection, enhancement of family life and the creation of an environment where all children were free from violence and exploitation. In part owing to a reduction in its debt servicing commitments, Guyana had increased its efforts in collaboration with regional and international organizations, and it hoped that the international community would ensure that the current crises did not undermine progress in that area.

53. Thanks to its efforts to improve the quality of education and eliminate disparities in access to education based on gender and geographical location, a net primary school enrolment rate of 96 per cent had been recorded, with little or no difference between the coastal and interior regions of the country. The challenge ahead would be to increase the transition rate of children from primary to secondary school, especially for boys, who were underrepresented; nonetheless, there was a strong likelihood that Guyana would attain universal primary education by 2015.

54. As for health, although immunization programmes were ongoing and the general situation had improved, Guyana would face a formidable challenge in its efforts to reduce the under-five mortality rate by two thirds by 2015. More needed to be done in the hinterland regions, but the establishment of adolescent wellness centres and the inclusion of health and family life issues in the school curriculum had yielded positive results.

55. The Rights of the Child Commission was responsible for monitoring Guyana's adherence to international obligations undertaken in that regard. A childcare and protection agency had been launched in July 2009, and laws on the protection, status and adoption of children had been passed. Parliament was currently considering other bills in favour of children.

56. During Child Protection Week in 2009, Guyana had raised awareness among the members of the community on the varying forms of child abuse, encouraging the community to be more proactive in the protection of children and to allow them to express themselves on issues affecting them.

57. More needed to be done in order to foster a world fit for children. Actions taken at the national level should be supported by bilateral and multilateral partnerships, especially in developing countries. She called for more dialogue and cooperation in promoting and protecting the rights of children.

58. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for Palestine) said she was deeply distressed that, despite the international community's promises, the rights of the child continued to be violated throughout the world. The significant gap between international legal standards pertaining to the rights of the child and the implementation of measures to promote and safeguard those rights meant that the culprits went unpunished, thus perpetuating the suffering of children. Such suffering had short- and long-term consequences for the whole of society and damaged the prospects for peace and development.

59. In Palestine, nearly all the provisions of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law were constantly being violated by the occupying Power, Israel. In the refugee camps or in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, millions of Palestinian children lived in poverty, insecurity, oppression, discrimination, humiliation and terror and were the targets of excessive, indiscriminate and lethal acts of violence committed by Israeli forces. That situation had never been more evident than during the Israeli offensive against the Gaza Strip in 2008, where a third of the Palestinians killed were children, and where hundreds of them had been injured. Civilian neighbourhoods and property had been directly targeted by the occupying Power, which had also attacked humanitarian workers, wantonly destroyed civilian infrastructure, blocked humanitarian aid and access to medical treatment for the wounded and sick and deprived the people of their fundamental rights to food and water. Those acts were not only serious, systematic violations of international law but also war crimes, for which accountability must be pursued. Moreover, Palestinian children continued to suffer from collective punishment in Gaza, where the situation was already dire before the Israeli attack, owing to the long siege during which Israel had deliberately blocked humanitarian access and the movement of persons and goods, considerably aggravating the existing humanitarian crisis.

60. Given that independent inquiries into Israel's assault on Gaza confirmed that Israel had committed grave breaches of international law, the international community should take the necessary steps to pursue accountability for those crimes; otherwise it would be impossible to heal the wounds of the Palestinian people and reconcile the ideals of a world fit for children with the realities of the Palestinian children living under Israeli occupation.

61. **Mr. Maiga** (Niger), recalling the commitments made by world leaders in adopting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, said that the Niger was a party to the Convention and other related international instruments and had submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. His country's National Committee for the Survival, Protection and Development of the Child had set up a process for monitoring the implementation of the Convention and had made significant progress in the areas of health and education. As for legislation, the Niger had strengthened its Penal Code by criminalizing infractions affecting the rights of the child and had established free prenatal consultations and patient care for children under five. Those steps, supported by the special programme of the President of the Republic, would be complemented by the adoption of a Children's Code.

62. In addition, under the National Plan of Action to Combat Child Trafficking, a number of children had been repatriated, rehabilitated and reintegrated. The multilateral agreement on cooperation in the matter had reinforced capacities for social mobilization, leading to greater awareness and active participation by many stakeholders. Lastly, the programme for the legal protection of children, through which juvenile courts had been established, had led to better care for children at risk.

63. Despite all those advances, much remained to be done, especially with regard to the registration of children at birth, the combating of violence and exploitation, and the enrolment of girls in school. Nonetheless, given the Government's political will, the commitment of all stakeholders and the dynamic nature of international cooperation as the target date of 2015 drew closer, the Niger was convinced that it could still improve the situation of the rights of the child in the coming years.

64. **Ms. Simovich** (Israel) said that Israel supported a number of actions taken by the United Nations regarding the rights of children, including the adoption of Security Council resolutions 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) and the appointment of a Special Representative on Violence against Children.

65. Recalling the statistics contained in the Secretary-General's report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, she said that no effort should be spared to end child recruitment into the armed forces and to eliminate child labour, in particular through national and international support for education.

66. Although it already had a set of laws and policies protecting the rights of minors, Israel had recently begun a reform of the way minors were dealt with in the criminal justice system, stressing rehabilitation over punitive measures. Special arrangements were made for children with disabilities, with the goal of integrating them into regular schools. Convinced of the importance of education in exposing children to a pluralistic environment, Israel had established a number of multicultural schools. Government efforts were complemented by civil society initiatives such as the Peres Center for Peace, which organized extracurricular programmes for Israeli and Palestinian children.

67. Unfortunately, some children were growing up under the threat of terrorism or were the victims of terrorism. A growing number of children, as noted in the report by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, were being recruited to carry out acts of terrorism, including suicide bombings, the worst imaginable form of child exploitation. Israel was disappointed that the Special Representative's report gave barely any mention of the practices of indoctrination and incitement to violence instilled by schools and the media. The international community must work together to abolish all practices that victimized children and, in the meanwhile, do everything in its power to protect them.

68. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt) congratulated Ms. Marta Santos País on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and assured her of his country's full support. Welcoming her forthcoming participation in the regional meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference on the topic of genital mutilation, organized by Egypt, he stressed the importance of economic and social development for the well-being of children, in view of the problems caused by the current financial crisis. He recalled that, on celebrating the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the "World fit for children" document, the international community had reaffirmed its commitment to the full implementation of the rights of the child. The problems encountered over the years had evidenced the need to strengthen international support and partnerships in order to overcome funding difficulties.

69. At the national and regional levels, Egypt was engaged in an ambitious action plan to control childhood diseases and provide assistance to mothers. In addition, under an initiative being carried out in partnership with international organizations including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), intergovernmental organizations and the private sector, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood had established more than 800 schools for girls over a three-year period. The Government supported such initiatives by devoting a portion of the national budget to child-related issues. Egypt had also effectively taken steps to combat genital mutilation by criminalizing it and conducting an awareness-raising campaign led by Suzanne Mubarak, the wife of the President. That initiative had been extended by the Second International Policy Conference on the African Child, organized under a plan to improve the situation of African children; the plan was coordinated by the Egyptian Ministry of State for Family and Population Affairs, which promoted the rights of the child and the empowerment of women and girls of all ages, in order to reinforce social stability.

70. Mrs. Mubarak, as president of the Women's International Peace Movement, also helped to combat the trafficking of persons, in particular women and children, by sponsoring an international partnership and by hosting a conference in Cairo on child

protection, the final declaration of which requested political and business leaders to take immediate steps in six areas.

71. Unreservedly supporting the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the extension of her mandate to all forms of violence against children in armed conflicts, his delegation hoped that the systematic violations of Palestinian children's rights, as confirmed in a number of international reports, would be noted when the Special Representatives presented their reports and taken into account in future reports.

72. **Mr. Schaper** (Netherlands) said that his country focused particular attention on girls, who were among the groups most vulnerable to violence. In collaboration with the United States of America and Brazil, the Netherlands had organized a side event during the ministerial meetings of the General Assembly in order to show its commitment to combating all forms of violence against girls. His delegation called on the United Nations and individual countries to keep the issue high on their agenda.

73. His delegation was convinced that the appointment of the Special Representative on Violence against Children, by increasing international cooperation in that area, would strengthen the protection of human rights all over the world. After expressing its support to the Special Representative, the Netherlands, which had invited her to visit the country, called on other countries to do everything possible to eliminate violence against children, especially girls.

74. Given the risks stemming from new technologies and greater mobility, the international community needed to make a concerted effort to put an end to the sexual exploitation of girls and adolescents and provide support to the victims of such exploitation, as called for in the Rio Declaration and Call for Action, in particular by strengthening enforcement measures, improving data collection, helping children and others to report violence and consulting children and youth in the elaboration of policies that concerned them.

75. In addition, the Netherlands welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the rights of the child, which, at the request of the General Assembly, focused on national and international efforts to eliminate child labour. The Secretary-General had concluded that progress in that area was still very limited, and he had called on States to maintain it high on the political agenda, noting that eliminating the worst forms of child labour by the year 2016 was an ambitious but achievable goal. The Netherlands shared that view and expressed its full commitment to helping to achieve that objective.

76. **Ms. Sodov** (Mongolia) drew attention to the many problems facing children in the world and the worsening of their situation as a result of the current economic crisis. As an example, 75 million children were still deprived of a primary school education and 182 million had no access to secondary schools.

77. Mongolia, which had signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, had taken steps to meet its commitments relating to the building of a "world fit for children". It had launched a National Programme of Action for the Protection and Development of Children for the period 2002-2010. Its Parliament had adopted a law against domestic violence and had amended the provisions of the Criminal Code relating to human trafficking.

78. In the area of health, the Government had launched a National Strategy on Infant Feeding, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal on infant mortality rates by the year 2015; that rate had already declined from 64.4 to 19.4 per 1,000 live births between 1990 and 2008. A similar improvement had been recorded in the under-five mortality rate between 1990 and 2007; in 2008, however, the rate had increased again as a result of the economic slowdown. Immunization coverage had reached 99 per cent, thereby reducing the prevalence of diseases.

79. The enrolment rate in preschool had improved, and a plan had been implemented in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and the United States Department of Labor to eliminate the worst forms of child labour. The aim was to increase awareness of the problem, provide training for staff members and members of civil society and examine the provisions of relevant legislation and policies. In December 2007, the Government had submitted its third and fourth reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

80. Despite those achievements, the implementation of child protection mechanisms and services continued to suffer from a lack of reliable data and insufficient capacity among service providers.

81. **Ms. Nzounza Lekaka** (Republic of the Congo) said that crises, natural disasters and conflicts prevented many developing countries from meeting the essential needs of children and achieving the goals of the "world fit for children" plan of action. For its part, the Republic of the Congo had taken a number of steps, acceding to the two Optional Protocols to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and making efforts to re-establish its education and health systems in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals.

82. Through its programme on survival and development of children for 2009-2013, it planned to establish universal access to basic care and services. With the help of the United Nations Population Fund, it was operating reproductive health and HIV/AIDS control programmes and mechanisms to combat sexual violence. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was in charge of the aspects related to the development and protection of refugee children. With the support of civil society, the Congo was also organizing many training and capacity-building activities to enable children to exercise their fundamental rights. On 29 August 2009, the Senate had adopted a law on child protection.

83. The Republic of the Congo was making efforts to control the intolerable phenomenon of violence against children with the help of development partners and civil society, by organizing awareness campaigns and strengthening medical, psychological, legal and economic assistance to victims. As for child soldiers, it had launched a weapons collection programme to promote the reintegration of 500 child soldiers by offering them training courses, medical and psychosocial services and the possibility of finding jobs. To tackle the problem of street children, the authorities, non-governmental organizations and development partners were setting up family reintegration, care and rehabilitation programmes.

84. However, in order to eradicate those phenomena and others such as drug addition, prostitution and begging, social policies had to be implemented through effective partnerships in order to promote sustainable human development and protect the fundamental rights of the child.

85. **Mr. Choeda** (Bhutan) said that his country, one of the first to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, had consistently accorded high priority to the protection and development of children. Bhutan had recently ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention and had submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It had also signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia.

86. Thanks to free basic education and health care, among other things, Bhutan was expected to achieve universal primary education well before 2015, and children's health had also improved remarkably in the past decade. Infant mortality rates had declined substantially, and Bhutan was on track towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 4 of reducing the under-five mortality rate. Growing attention was being paid to the needs of children with disabilities.

87. Noting that globalization and modernization were posing a threat to Bhutan's society and values, he cited the growing risks of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse among youth.

88. The right of children to be protected against discrimination and exploitation had been enshrined in the new constitution, adopted in 2008. A reform of the juvenile justice system was under way and would be followed by bills on adoption and domestic violence. The National Commission for Women and Children, a fully functional and autonomous body, was responsible for defending the rights of women and children. Campaigns to raise awareness about the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been carried out by a number of stakeholders, especially law enforcement agents, the judiciary, teachers, parents and children themselves.

89. Despite its steady progress, Bhutan, one of the least developed countries, had suffered serious setbacks as a result of the recent earthquake and other natural disasters. Assistance from development partners was therefore of great importance, and his delegation hoped that it would continue in order to enable the country to pursue the objectives of protecting and promoting the rights of children.

90. **Mr. António** (Mozambique) said that the principles of the best interests of the child and respect for his or her views were incorporated in his country's constitution, which also protected children against any form of discrimination or abuse of power, including within the family. Mozambique had signed a number of relevant international instruments, such as the

Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto, and the International Labour Organization conventions concerning the minimum age for admission to employment and concerning the prohibition and immediate action for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, and it had adopted a series of laws, policies and measures to protect the rights of children.

91. The Government had also adopted a National Action Plan for Children 2006-2011 and an Action Plan for Orphan and Vulnerable Children, based on the recommendations of the special session of the General Assembly on children and the outcome document of the Second Pan-African Forum on the Future of Children, adopted in Cairo on 2 November 2007. Information on the rights of the child had also been included in school textbooks and in teacher and police training schools.

92. The rights of children could not be protected, however, without an improvement in the standard of living of their parents. He therefore hoped that the development partners would fulfil their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals, in particular with regard to the special needs of Africa, for without international assistance the efforts of the developing countries could not achieve the desired results.

93. **Ms. Al Kendi** (United Arab Emirates) said that, despite the international community's commitments to a world fit for children, millions of children from developing countries suffered from poverty, sickness, violence and exploitation of all kinds. The economic crisis and climate change made the situation even worse. She paid tribute to the United Nations for its actions to protect children, which her country unreservedly supported.

94. The United Arab Emirates was a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was examining the possibility of signing the two Optional Protocols. Her country was also a signatory to International Labour Organization Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age for admission to employment, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The provisions of most of those international instruments had been incorporated into national legislation, and a bill on the rights of children was currently being prepared.

95. Several indicators relating to children's health and education had improved in her country. The maternal mortality rate had dropped to 5.37 per 1,000 births, and the under-five mortality rate to 9.87 per 1,000. Her country had recorded no cases of poliomyelitis or diphtheria since 1998, no deaths from measles or diarrhoeal diseases and no stillbirths. The Government had expanded prenatal diagnostic and childbirth services in the hospital environment. It was also promoting early detection of diseases and had set up a special programme for adolescents in addition to medical care in schools and free school lunches.

96. Education was a national priority, and a "schools of the future" programme was on track to becoming an international programme. The primary school enrolment rate had reached 86 per cent. In 2007, the country had also launched a programme to help a number of developing countries improve the implementation of their policies for children.

97. Many children were living in deplorable conditions and were deprived of their basic rights because of poverty, armed conflict or foreign occupation. The plight of Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip was of particular concern. As the situation of children reflected that of society in general, it was important to provide sustained assistance to countries suffering from such problems, in order to enable them to provide for the well-being of their children.

98. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that he would have liked to see some more detailed information in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict on her visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

99. He recalled that it was the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights; he noted that Bangladesh had been one of the first parties to the Convention and its two Optional Protocols and that it continued to actively pursue its efforts in that area, in particular under the auspices of SAARC.

100. The first National Plan of Action for Children dated back to 1992, and the third (2005-2010) reflected the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals and the "World fit for children" document. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper had fully taken into account the needs and rights of children. For the past three decades, Bangladesh had been working in collaboration

with UNICEF and other partners to improve the health and nutrition of mothers and children, the quality of water and sanitation facilities, and education. Thanks to significant budgetary allocations, the country had made progress in reducing child mortality and malnutrition, among other things. Disparities between boys and girls in most social indicators had also been reduced or even eliminated, for instance in primary school enrolment. Special programmes for the disadvantaged, including children with disabilities and street children, had been implemented.

101. Bangladesh had enacted stringent laws to protect children, especially girls, from all forms of exploitation, violence or discrimination. It was a party to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour and was pursuing the elimination of such labour. Its garment industry was already totally child labour free.

102. Throughout the world, poverty and hunger on the one hand and armed conflict and foreign occupation on the other were the main obstacles to the development of children. In that regard, Bangladesh was taking action as a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF and of its Bureau, and it was the second largest troop-contributing country to peacekeeping operations.

103. He hoped that other delegations would give their enthusiastic support when Bangladesh introduced the draft resolution to the General Assembly on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010.

104. **Ms. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that her delegation fully aligned itself with the statement delivered by Sweden on behalf of the European Union. Child protection was one of her country's priorities in the field of human rights, security and socio-economic development at both the national and the international level. As a middle-income, multi-ethnic and geo-politically stable country, Montenegro was on track to meet all the Millennium Development Goals. Thus it was in a strong position to implement social reforms based on an "ethos for all children", under which each child could grow up healthy, educated, protected and able to develop to his or her full potential. Montenegro therefore was continuing its efforts to build up its capacities and the functioning of its institutions for the fulfilment of the rights of children, especially the most vulnerable, including Roma children.

105. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Montenegro had launched a series of projects in cooperation with UNICEF, including an analysis of the situation of women and children. In November 2008, the country had submitted, for the first time as an independent State, its report on the implementation of the Convention, followed by the reports on the implementation of the Optional Protocols in June 2009. The country had also aligned its legislation and policies with the provisions of the Convention.

106. One of the main aspects of the strategy adopted by her country was the reform of the juvenile justice system. She welcomed the cooperation between UNICEF and the Government, which had played a role in transforming attitudes and practice and had helped create momentum for developing innovative solutions for children at risk or in conflict with the law. Her country would be organizing a regional conference in November on "Copenhagen criteria and rights of the child".

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.